RAJYA SABHA

Wednesday, the 19th July, 1989/ 28 Asadha, 1911 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock, **Mr. Chairman** in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 21.

श्री सत्य प्रकाश मालवीय : मान्यवर, कम्प्ट्रोलर एंड आडिटर जनरल की रिपोर्ट पर प्रधान मंत्री ने इस्तीफा दे दिया है, क्या ऐसी कोई खबर है? . . . (**व्यवधान**) आपको खबर आई है कि नहीं आई ? (**व्यवधान**)

श्री सभापति : आप बैठिये ।

श्री दोपेन घोष : बाहर बड़ी खबर है कि प्रधान मंत्री ने इस्तीफा दे दिया है । . . . (**व्यवधान**) जैसे जापान के प्रधान मंत्री ने इस्तीफा दिया है, क्या यहां के प्रधान मंत्री ने भी इस्तीफा दे दिया है ? और यदि नहीं दिया है, तो दे देना चाहिए ।

श्री एन० के० पी० साल्वे : मान्यवर, क्या यह कोई सपना देख रहे हैं ?

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA: Take up 26 also. Both 21 and 26 can be taken together.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let us see when we come to 26.

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA: That is also about Indo-Nepal relations.

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is no bar on day-dreaming!

Censorship imposed by Nepal on Indian Newspapers and Magazines

*21. SHRI V. GOPALSAMY :
SHRI PASUMPON THA. KIRUTTINAN:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Nepal has recently imposed censorship on Indian newspapers and magazines; and

(b) if so, what action has been taken by the Government of India in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH): (a) There is no official ban as such, but certain informal instructions have resulted in preventing the entry of Indian newspapers into Nepal.

(b) The Indian Embassy in Kathmandu has been periodically taking up this matter with the Government of Nepal.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY : Mr. Chairman, Sir, the answer given by our honourable Minister, Mr. Natwar Singh, is totally misleading and ridiculous. Sir, old habits die hard. Theretore, our honourable Minister, a former bureaucrat, has been expecting a Gazette notification about the ban order and expecting that it should be served on him. Yesterday, that is, 18th July, Nepal banned the entry of over 50 Indian magazines, and the order has been conveyed through a Government circular, copies of which has been forwarded to the postal and customs authorities for immediate action. The magazines include those for children and women, like *Nandan*, *Chandamama*, *Feminan* and *Eve's Weekly*. Like the legendary Kumbhakarna, our External Affairs

*The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri V. Gopalsamy.

Ministry has been in deep slumber or hibernation. Therefore, they have given such a reply. Sir, on the other hand, despite the introduction of the work permit system the organised sector in Nepal has been inviting applications for jobs only from *bona fide* Nepal citizens. which is sheer discrimination against Indians, Nepal is doing very good lobbying at the international level on the diplomatic front and that is why a resolution was tabled in the United States Congress on 10th May requesting India to stop action against Nepal. Also, in the Australian Senate, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, in his reply to a question has said, "We share the concern of Nepal." The refore, I would like to know from the honourable Minister what steps we have taken to restore normalcy, because it is only a symptom of a deeper malady; it is evidence of the deterioration of our relationship with Nepal. So, what steps have you taken to restore normalcy with Nepal—a Hindu kingdom, a landlocked country, with whom we have been having cultural and traditional ties for centuries?

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Sir, are we combining Question No. 21 and 26 together?

MR. CHAIRMAN : No. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH : Sir, I will then confine myself to Question No. 21 which relates to censorship of the press. Now, with regard to the broadside Shri Gopalsamy has fired, as usual, I won't indulge in verbal overkill as he does. One of the lessons a diplomat learns is he thinks twice before saying 'nothing'.

The newspaper cutting that you have referred to is before me. Before coming to the House I spoke to our Ambassador in Kathmandu. I asked him whether there was any official communication available. He said so far he had not seen any communication from the Government of Nepal, but he would let us know. If I get an answer during the course of the next few minutes, I will place it before the House.

We know that these newspapers and magazines, the ones that the hon. Member has read out—NANDAN, CHANDAMAMA, FEMINA, EVE'S WEEKLY, SUN, FILMFARE, STARDUST, STAR FILMFARE, STARDUST, STAR & STYLE, MAYA, INDRAJAL, AMAR CHITRA KATHA—all these have come under review. For the last two years we have noticed that without issuing a formal order an indication is giaven to an official newspaper agency called SANDESH GRAHA. They are the sole agents importing newspapers and periodicals in the Kathmandu Valley when they go from India. This information has come through this particular agency. It is quite obvicus that the effort is that the Indian newspapers which are free and which are forthright with regard to all that is availabe in the news sector. both internal and external, are curbed.

The Embassy has from time to time taken this up. What is worse is that all the newspapers which arrive from India have first to be submitted for scrutiny and censorship to the Zonal Commissioner's Office. It has been observed that since early 1989 the Zonal Commissioner's Office has become more vigilant in their censorship.

Now, one other example I will give to show how arbitrarily and strangely things happen in our very dear nieghbour. For a number of years there was a restriction on the *Indian Express* amongst other papers like *Times of India, The Illustrated Weekly*, but now we have noticed in the last few week because of the particular manner in which this paper has reported events here, it

today that our Embassy is not aware of any such order...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: This news item appeared in the *Times of India* and *Navbharat Times* this morning and as soon as we saw this, we got in touch with our Embassy in Khatmandu. We are aware of this news and I have read it.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: You have said: "Our Embassy is not aware of it."

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Our Embassy is trying to find out and if you were posted in the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu, you would have some idea of the perils of representing India there.

SHRI PASUMPON THA. KIRUTTINAN: Mr. Chairman, Sir, on the 9th July, 1989, the Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. Shreshta has stated that Nepal is willing to have talks on the entire gamut of relations between the two countries including a review of the 1950 treaty and any time-frame proposals by India would be acceptable to Nepal. He has also stated: "It was impossible to believe India that India has been honest to hold talks." In view of this statement by the Prime Minister of Nepal, I would like to know the response of our Government. May I also know from the Minister actions taken by the Government so far to maintain the status quo with Nepal? Our relations with our neighbouring countries are becoming sore.

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Sir, with great respect I have to submit that this supplementary relates to question No. 26 and when we come to it, we are willing to answer it.

श्री सभापति : सप्लीमेंटरी के ऊपर अगर आपको कुछ कहना है, कह दो ।

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: First of all, I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Member in the house to the statement that the Prime Minister has made at his press conference when he returned from his foreign tour two days ago. There was an expression of deep regret, anguish and sorrow that the relationship with Nepal should have taken the turn that it has. As I said earlier, it is inconceivable that anybody in this House or in the Government or in the country would want to have any deterioration in our relationship with Nepal. Why? We have a common border which extends to 1700 KMs. We share a common history, a common culture. References have been made to the religion. Five million people of Nepalese origin live in India. They can join every coanceivable activity in India: get into the Indian army, get into all services except the Indian Foreign Service and the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Police Services. They can own property, they can transact business which they do. They can go to Nepal. They do not need a passport. Indian currency, till the other day, when restrictions were imposed, was convertible. That means you do not need to go to a bank for traveller's cheque. Now, this is the nature of our relationship with Nepal going back many hundreds of years and certainly since 1950 with the treaty of friendship which says, "there should be enternal friendship and understanding between Nepal and India". Now, why should anybody in the Government or even the people of India wish to do injury to this relationship? Now, we have had various levels—official level, ministerial level, head of Government level—asked the Nepalese Government to let us know what precisely they want. Correspondence is going on between the Prime Minister and the king of Nepal, between the Foreign Minister of India and the Foreign Minister of Nepal and we have asked and suggested on a number of occasions, on the 19th of April, on the 16th, 18th and 25th of May, we have been in touch with them and Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao has written on the 16th suggesting agenda for the talks. Now, we

has not been included in this way. They are hoping that newspapers which are not giving an objective appraisal of what is happening here are shown special consideration. So, what I want to submit is it is very distressing that this kind of a situation should have arisen. It is not of our making, but it is indicative of the extraneous elements that are entering into a traditionally friendly relationship with a country with which we want nothing except deep friendship, goodwill, understanding, cooperation warmth of feeling and wish them all the best, but I, honestly, having had some experience in the field of diplomacy for a number of years, find it extremely difficult to fathom the reasons why this kind of an attitude is taken when it is not possible to restrict the entry of Indian newspapers because we have an open border, but it is indicative of the way the minds of the authorities in Nepal are working. This only adds to the problem that exists. The attempt seems to be to want to distance the relationships between the two peoples and the two countries. Why this is being done in really incomprehensible to me.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY : The hon. Minister has not replied to the second part of my question about the steps being taken by India to neutralise the impression being created at the international level that India is behaving like a big bully. The Ambassador of Nepal, Mrs. Binda Shah had made a statement on 4th of May in Delhi when she participated in a seminar on Indo-Nepal relations organised by India Society. It is a very interesting statement and I quote, "I asked your Foreign Minister...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Gopalsamy. Kindly...

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY : Sir, this is very interesting. It is concerned with it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All you say is interesting, but the question is it does not arise. The supplementary is to be restricted to the question.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY : It is very relevant to this.

MR. CHAIRMAN : This question is about newspapers and magazines and you restrict to that only.

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH : Sir, I will answer his question when he comes to question No. 26. .. *(Interruptions)*... I am glad that he has raised about it. I will answer it.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You put a supplementary only out of the question.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY : The Minister has stated in his statement that our Embassy is doing all possible work there. ...*(Interruptions)*.. Sir, may I know the response of the Government to the observations made by the Ambassador of Nepal in Delhi : "We do not understand the policy of this Government."? What kind of relations you are going to have?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You restrict your supplementary to the question. Please read it.

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: He has not read it.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: Already censorship is existing in Nepal for months and nothing has been done in this regard.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Your supplementary should not be out of the question.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY : Regarding censorship we should not be censored here. The censorship has been existing there. Now the ban order also has come. The Minister has been telling us even

have said that we would like to discuss the overall relationships...

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please cut short.

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH : No, Sir. I want to take care of all the other supplementaries.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That would be too much. It would be difficult if so many supplementaries are asked.

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH : Sir, I am willing to explain all this if the House likes because we have nothing to hide. If the Nepalese Government wants MEN treatment, we are willing to give it but then they must be quite sure that this will create more problems for the Government and the people of Nepal than the present arrangement which we are suggesting.

SHRI KAPIL VERMA : Sir, I was posted in Nepal on behalf of a leading newspaper of India. I know the conditions of the Government. Before the SAARC summit, they had informally banned the entry of all daily newspapers into Kathmandu. When Rajiv Gandhi went there, then on that occasion, they opened it. Now again they have informally banned certain newspapers. Now, what is happening is that at the airport itself, censors are there. They look into every newspaper and practically, all the daily newspapers are not allowed to come in except one or two which the hon. Minister mentioned. So, this is exactly what is happening. Now the censorship and the form of censorship that the Government of Nepal is indulging in is that the correspondents who are working there—there are only a few correspondents now—their telegrams and their messages are censored. Firstly, the Indian Embassy telegram office used to be allowed to journalists when I was there. Now, they have to go to the telegraph office and that telegraph office delays, curtails or mutilates the telegrams and this is a strong disability for journalists. They are physically intimidated. In fact, they have expelled three or four correspondents of the *Times of India* and *The Hindustan Times*. Now what exactly is happening is that in respect of one correspondent of the *Times of India*, the police sent a mob of 1,000 people. They tried to burn his house because he is writing anti-Nepal. They said, you must get out. Now, this sort of disability and intimidation is there. I want to know from the Government what steps the Government has taken to persuade the Government of Nepal to give adequate protection to journalists to function in Kathmandu and about the informal censorship and restrictions on the entry of newspapers?

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH : Sir, repeatedly our Embassy in Kathmandu and the Foreign Office here bring to the attention of the Government of His Majesty the King of Nepal the treatment that is meted out not only to the members of the Indian media, representatives of newspapers but to people of Indian origin. There are about 1,50,000 Indian nationals in Nepal as compared to 50 lakhs Nepalese in India. Now, contrary to the letter and spirit of the 1950 treaty and contrary to the spirit of our relationships, we know for the last several years that discrimination against people of Indian origin is increasing as they have been asked to have work permits, they have been asked to have identity cards. Foreign firms are told that they should not employ Indians. Why? This is contrary to the 1950 treaty. All this we have brought to the notice of the Government of His Majesty the King of Nepal. I do not wish to comment on the manner in which that Government functions, it is for them to decide. But we do find it very incomprehensible that in the Government of Nepal if a decision was taken, that decision could not be implemented rightaway and it is also true that the very

nature of the Government that exists there is so that nothing happens in the country without the approval of the Government.

श्री चतुरानन मिश्र : सभापति महोदय, यह अखबार पर जो पाबंदी नेपाल की सरकार ने लगाई है, वह हमारे और नेपाल के जो बिगड़ते संबंध है उसी का नतीजा है, पहले तो इसको समझने की जरूरत है । यह मैं इसलिए कह रहा हूं क्योंकि मैं उसी इलाके से आता हूं जहां दोनों देशों का बार्डर है । सच में बार्डर है नहीं, माना हुआ है कि बार्डर है ...(**व्यवधान**)...

श्री सभापति : प्रश्न करिए ...(**व्यवधान**)

श्री चतुरानन मिश्र: थोड़ी सी इजाजत दीजिए । मंत्री महोदय ने कहा कि उनको पता नहीं है कि यह संबंध क्यों बिगड़ रहे हैं ? जब इनको बीमारी ही मालूम होगा तो यह दवा क्या देंगे ? इसलिए मैं कहना चाहता हूं कि नेपाल के लोगों ने बहुत स्पष्ट ढंग से कहा है कि 1950 की जो ट्रीटी है, वह अनइक्वल ट्रीटी है । उसमें कुछ ऐसी बातें हैं जो अब यह मानने के लिए तैयार नहीं है और हमारे मंत्री महोदय या हमारी सरकार क्या करती है कि एम्बेसेडर को कह देते हैं...जैसे हम लोग कहते हैं कि जब कहीं किसी हरिजन पर जुल्म हुआ तो हम लोगों को कह देते हैं कि वहां दरोगा से बात करें या बी०डी०ओ० से बात करें । नेपाल की सरकार से ऐसा बर्ताव नहीं किया जा सकता । ...(**व्यवधान**)...

श्री सभापति : आप अखबार के बारे में कहिए । ...(**व्यवधान**)...

श्री चतुरानन मिश्र : तो अखबार अखबार की पाबंदी इसी का आफशूट है इसलिए आपको पर्सनल इनिशियेटिव लेना चाहिए । मैं सरकार से जानना चाहता हूं कि क्या कारण है कि आप अपने एम्बेसेडर को कहते हैं, आप अखबार में बयान देते हैं, वह भी अखबार में बयान देते हैं फिर डेटोरियेट करते हैं और फिर अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर सारे भारत को फजीहती में लाते हैं ? क्यों नहीं आप व्यक्तिगत दिलचस्पी लेकर इस समस्या का निदान निकालते ?

श्री के० नटवर सिंह : सभापति महोदय, पहले तो मैं मिश्र जी का आभारी हूं क्योंकि उन्होंने यह सवाल उठाया । उन्होंने भी कोशिश की है कि हमारे जो रिश्ते इस वक्त नाजुक स्थिति में पहुंच गए हैं, उनका हल निकल जाए । मैं उनको बधाई देना चाहता हूं । मेरे पास नेपाल के अपने एक मित्र को भी लाए थे, जो वहां बड़े प्रभावशाली हैं लेकिन उनका कुछ असर नहीं हुआ नेपाल में । अब आपने जो यह कहा कि अगर बीमारी ही नहीं मालूम तो उसका इलाज क्या होगा ? मैं बड़े अदब के साथ कहना चाहता हूं कि बीमारी मालूम है हमको, मगर मैं जिक्र नहीं करना चाहता यहां पर और आप भी जानते हैं कि बीमारी क्या है और असलियत क्या है ? यह बड़ा ही नाजुक सवाल है । मैं यह जरूर कहना चाहता हूं कि ... (**व्यवधान**)...

PROF. C. LAKSHMANNA : What is the disease? (*Interruptions*). It is not a matter between those two alone. It is a question of the House. We would like to know what the disease is. (*Interruptions*).

श्री चतुरानन मिश्र: कोई गुप्त रोग होगा, काहे को आपको बताएं ?.. (**व्यवधान**)..

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH : Professor Lakshmanna knows precisely the delicate nature of it. But I do want to submit one thing. On the 16th of June, Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao wrote to his counterpart in the Government of His Majesty the King and he suggested that we should have the following agenda for our discussions:

(1) A review of Indo-Nepal relations: a framework for a durable relationship :

(2) The working of the 1950 Treaty both in letter and spirit:

Problems that have arisen:

(a) Work permits:

(b) Handling of restrictions of Indians in Nepal and Nepalese in India:

(3) Issues relating to trade, transit, prevention of unauthorised trade, supply of essential commodities, overall economic cooperation, security perceptions and bilateral undertakings.

And we would like to have a frank and open dialogue. Now, with regard to the reply that came to this letter.....

AN HON. MEMBER: Of the 16th June?

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Yes. With regard to the reply that came to this letter, I only want you to refer to it because I only highlighted some points because by their very nature they are confidential exchanges.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Put it briefly then.

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: They have not responded. We have said that we want to discuss overall relationship of India with Nepal. But they want to discuss the specific issues of treaty and transit and the zone of peace. Unless we are able to agree to a common meeting point, it becomes difficult. Now, they are a sovereign country and they want to run their foreign policy in a particular manner and it is for them to do so. But what is happening is that this is straining the relationship and we do not want this strain. They want the "most favoured nation" treatment. We are willing to offer it to them. But they should at least let us know what precisely they have in mind because a multiplicity of statements from various hierarchical levels are being issued.

SHRI MURASOLI MARAN: Sir, what is the reply?. (*Interruptions*). Sir, what is this reply. ...(*Interruptions.*)....

SHRI JAGESH DESAI: Sir, what is this? We have spent twenty-five minutes on one question! What is this?...(*Interruptions*)...Twenty-five minutes for one question? All questions are important...(*Interruptions*)....

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 22.

SHRI MURASOLI MARAN: Sir, he has not completed and he is willing to read out from it. .. (*Interruptions*)... He is willing to read out from the letter. Please permit him to read it out in the House.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: He should not impose censorship on himself!

MR. CHAIRMAN; It is of a confidential nature and, therefore, he cannot give all the details.

SHRI MURASOLI MARAN: Sir, you are censoring the Minister. Otherwise, he was willing...(*Interruptions*,...

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: I will reply when we come to Question No. 26....(*Interruptions*).

SHRI MURASOLI MARAN: Sir, let him complete the reply.

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Now, in the reply what they have said is that they have suggested some restructuring of the agenda that we had proposed and they would like, as I said, two main points to be discussed and one is that agenda item No. 5 of the letter should also include a proposal for discussion on the zone of peace. What we have said is that we are willing to discuss everything with them, not restricted to anything, but an overall discussion of our relationship, because the commitment of

the Government and the people of India is that we want friendly, good-neighbourly and friction-free relations.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Kindly continue to try for it. Now, Question No. 22.

Postponement of the meeting of Foreign Ministers of SAARC

*22. SHRI HARI SINGH: †
DR. RATNAKAR PANDEY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation which was to be held on 28th June, 1989 in Islamamabad, Pakistan has been postponed;

(b) if so, what was the cause of the postponement of the above meeting; and

(c) what is the reaction of the Government of India in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH): (a) and (b) The seventh session of the SAARC Council of Ministers, scheduled to have been held on July 1-2, 1989 in Islamabad was postponed consequent to Sri Lanka informing the host country Pakistan of its decision not to participate in the meeting. Since the Council of Ministers would not have been able to take any decisions in the absence of any single member country, this meeting was postponed to a date to be decided after mutual consultations between all the member States.

(c) India is disappointed at the postponement of the meeting and views it as a setback to the process of regional cooperation.

श्री हरी सिंह : : मान्यवर, मैं मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूं कि श्रीलंका ने अपने पत्र में जो कारण लिखे हैं हिस्सा न लेने के लिए, वह कारण क्या हैं ?

दूसरे, जो वर्तमान परिस्थितियों में श्रीलंका भारत के जो संबंध हैं उनको देखते हुए क्या जो सार्क की मीटिंग होने वाली है उसके संविधान में क्या ऐसा भी है कि यदि कोई भी मैंबर पार्टिसिपेट करने में विवश हो तो मैं कहना चाहता हूं कि ऐसा दूसरा पड़ोसी राष्ट्र जो उसका सदस्य है वह बदली हुई परिस्थिति में उपस्थित होने में मजबूर हो तो क्या सार्क का जो हमारा यह संगठन है, यह फेल हो जाएगा, निष्फल हो जाएगा ?

श्री नटवर सिंह : सभापति महोदय, सार्क के संविधान में लिखा हुआ है कि कोई भी दो-तरफा सवाल नहीं उठाया जाएगा चाहे वह भारत-श्रीलंका के बीच का हो, श्रीलंका -मालदीव के बीच का हो या नेपाल-बंगला देश का हो, वह सवाल नहीं उठाया जाएगा । दूसरी बात वह लिखी हुई है कि कोई भी मीटिंग हो चाहे फारेन मिनिस्टर्स की हो या प्रधान मंत्रियों की हो या राष्ट्रपतियों की हो, अगर उसमें से एक भी मेम्बर नहीं आएगा तो बैठक नहीं हो सकेगी । अगर उसमें से एक मम्बर नहीं आयेगा तो वह बैठक नहीं हो सकती । उन्होंने यह पत्र लिख दिया 24 जून को । उसकी सदारत कर रहे थे पाकिस्तान के वजीर-ए खारजा, विदेश मंत्री यादव खां । उन्होंने लिखा सभापति जी हम नहीं आ पायेंगे क्योंकि, इस वक्त हिन्दुस्तान की आई०पी०के० एफ० श्रीलंका में है । यह सवाल श्रीलंका

†The Question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Hari Singh.